

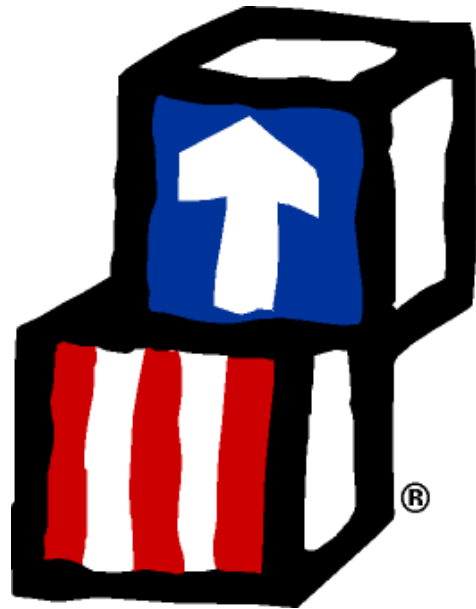


HEAD START

Educate

Encourage

Empower



2024/2025 FAMILY HANDBOOK

Dear Families,

Welcome to Head Start! We feel honored that you have chosen us as a support for your family! Head Start is the nation's leading early childhood education program serving children and families throughout the country for over 55 years. Best of all, it is provided at no cost to families! At Head Start, we believe that you, as parents, are the first and most important teachers of your children. Our goal is to support you in this role.

Families are such an important part of the Head Start program. We listen to what you have to say. Our staff are equipped to support you in life's challenges. Maybe you want to get a full time job, get your high school equivalency diploma, go to college, or buy a house. We can support you with these goals. Or maybe you need some help in making ends meet, like assistance with food or clothing, or buying a car, or becoming a more patient parent. We can support you with these goals as well. Whatever your situation or need, please talk to us about it. We are here to support you and your family. Our services are all confidential; we will not share your personal information or situation with anyone, unless you give us written permission to do so.

As a Head Start parent, you have the opportunity to plan program activities, make decisions about policies, and have a say about the future of our program. Please consider participating in our Parent Committee events or our Policy Council to have your voice heard. You can also provide feedback or ideas for improvement to any Head Start staff member at any time. We value your feedback and your ideas.

Our commitment is always safety first. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with us.

We are hoping that you will visit your child's classroom this year. Volunteers are always welcome at Head Start.

As a parent of a Head Start child, I know this program works! We look forward to working with your child(ren) and your family. Thank you for choosing Head Start!

Sincerely,

Lynn Langworthy

Lynn Langworthy
Head Start Director
ACCORD

Questions, Concerns and Suggestions for Improvement

- **Who do I contact?**

Anyone with a question or concern should talk with the staff person with whom they have a concern. If unsatisfied with the results, please contact that person's supervisor. If still unsatisfied with the results, then contact the Head Start Director. Finally, if you are still unsatisfied, a written complaint should be filed with the Head Start Director. All written complaints will be brought to the attention of the Policy Council.

Any concerns that jeopardize the health and safety of a child should be brought to the attention of the Center Manager or Head Start Director immediately.

The policies contained in this Family Handbook are subject to change. If you have any questions about the policies in this handbook or would like more information, please contact your Family Partner or Home Based Visitor.

My Head Start Contact Information

Family Partner/Home Base Visitor:

Office Phone: _____

Classroom Teacher/Home Base Visitor:

Office Phone: _____

Head Start Bus Driver:

Office Phone: _____

Center Manager:

Office Phone: _____

Assistant Director of Child and Family Service

Amy Manroe

Office Phone: 585-268-7605 X1413

Operations and Finance Manager

Annette Lerro

Office Phone: 585-268-7605 X1031

Head Start Director

Lynn Langworthy

Office Phone: 585-268-7605 X1323

ERSEA Specialist

Katie Carr

Office Phone: 585-268-7605 X1525

Education Specialist

Jessica Burdick

Office Phone: 585-268-7605 x1556

Assistant Director of Operations

Danielle Hosley

Office Phone: 585-268-7605 x1859



ACCORD's Mission Statement:

As a Community Action Agency, we believe in the strength, dignity, and potential of all people. We offer access to opportunities, resources, and services to strengthen individuals, families, and communities. We are committed to improving the community's response to rural poverty and giving a voice to the unheard.

ACCORD's Head Start Vision Statement:

ACCORD Head Start works in partnership with children, parents, and community members to:

- Reinforce parents in their role as primary educators of their children.
- Offer learning environments for all families of different ages and cultures.
- Assist all children in developing socially emotionally, intellectually, and physically to their full potential.
- Inspire families to break the cycle of poverty by utilizing the community support systems which strengthen the family as a whole, and each member individually.
- Build a foundation of good health practices on which each child and family grows.
- Staff and parents share decision-making at each step of the program to ensure that children are best prepared to be full citizens in their local communities and in their nation.

My Rights as a Head Start Parent

- To be treated with respect and dignity. Expect guidance for my child from Head Start, which will help his or her individual development.
- Help develop adult and child programs that will improve daily living for me and my family.
- Feel welcomed in the classroom at any time. There is no need to inform anyone beforehand.
- Choose whether or not I participate, without fear of endangering my child's right to be in the program.
- Be informed regularly of my child's progress in Head Start.
- Take part in policy decisions affecting the planning and operation of the program including the budget and the level of education and experience required to fill various staff positions.
- Take part in planning and carrying out programs designed to increase my skills in areas of possible employment.
- Be informed about all community resources concerning health, education, and the improvement of family life.

My Responsibilities as a Head Start Parent

- To learn about program operation and take part in policy decisions if I desire.
- Accept Head Start as an opportunity through which I can improve my life as well as the lives of my children.
- Participate in the program as a planner, an observer, or a volunteer, and to contribute my services toward the enrichment of the program.

- Provide parent leadership by taking part in program governance, and to explain the program to other parents and encourage their full participation.
- Meet with Family Support Staff, Classroom Teachers, and Home Based Visitors to discuss ways in which I can further my family's development.
- Work and plan with my Family Support Staff, Classroom Teacher or Home Visitor and other parents in a cooperative way.
- Offer constructive feedback of the program, defend it against unfair criticism, and share in evaluating it.
- Always treat staff, children and other parents fairly, with respect, dignity and maintain confidentiality.
- I understand that my presence at any Head Start activity obligates me to treat all program information as highly privileged and that it will not be repeated or used outside of the program.

ACCORD has the responsibility to provide a safe work environment to our employees. Parents/guardians, volunteers, vendors and/or other visitors who threaten, harass, intimidate, or subject our employees to physical or verbal abuse, use profane or other inappropriate language in communicating with or referring to our employees, or otherwise create an unsafe work environment may be prohibited from participating in program activities and/or from being allowed on ACCORD premises.

Head Start, Early Head Start, and Home Based Program Options

Center Based Head Start: The Head Start program is a preschool program for children ages three to five years old. There are currently four Head Start Centers located in Cuba, Friendship, Bolivar, and Wellsville. Center-based programs offer developmentally appropriate activities for children and their families.

Center Based Early Head Start: The Early Head Start program integrates child development, health (physical, dental, mental, and nutritional), and family and community partnerships to bring about a broad range of services which address the needs of each child and his/her family. Early Head Start offers center-based programs in Wellsville, Belfast, Cuba, Bolivar, and Friendship and serves infants and toddlers ages 6 weeks to 3 years old.

Home Based Head Start and Early Head Start: The Home Based program provides services in the homes of children ages birth to five and their families living in Allegany County. Home Visitors conduct educational activities in partnership with the parent on a weekly basis. Home Based families meet two times per month for group activities.

Qualifications of our Team Members

Our goal is to staff our program with highly qualified, competent, experienced, caring and compassionate team members. Here are the educational and experience requirements for our education positions.

Early Head Start Teachers must possess an Infant Toddler Child Development Associate credential or equivalent (120 hours of training in infant/toddler caregiving and 480 hours of professional experience caring for infants and/or toddlers) or a college degree in Early Childhood Education. They must also demonstrate competency to provide effective and nurturing teacher-child interactions, plan and implement learning experiences that ensure effective curriculum implementation and use of assessment and promote children's developmental progress, including children with disabilities and dual language learners.

Head Start Teachers must possess a college degree in early childhood education or a related field with at least 18 credit hours in early childhood education or a related area with experience teaching preschool children. They must also demonstrate competency to provide effective and nurturing teacher-child interactions, plan and implement learning experiences that ensure effective curriculum implementation and use of assessment and promote children’s developmental progress, including children with disabilities and dual language learners.

Home Visitors must possess a Home Based Child Development Associate credential or comparable credential or college degree (120 hours of training and 480 hours of experience in a home based setting). They must also demonstrate competency to plan and implement home based learning experiences that ensure effective implementation of the home visiting curriculum and promote children’s progress across the standards including children with disabilities and dual language learners, and to build respectful, culturally responsive, and trusting relationships with families.

The **Head Start Director** must possess at least a bachelor’s degree in community services administration, education, applied health or a related field with experience in supervision of staff, fiscal management, and administration of early education programs.

Center Managers must possess a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or a related field with one year teaching young children and one year of supervisory experience or must meet the education and experience requirements of the Office of Children and Family Services.

Head Start Curriculum

Our program uses effective, intentional, and responsive teaching practices to help your child make progress towards goals while engaging you and other family members in taking an active role in your child’s learning. As we know, strong partnerships that encourage family engagement are an essential part of any high-quality early childhood education program. Our program utilizes the **Teaching Strategies** comprehensive approach to assist us in meeting these needs. The program offers benefits to staff, families, and children alike, all while meeting state and federal early learning guidelines. When teachers and families work together, children’s development and learning is fully supported. Below are brief descriptions of the curriculums that we use.

The Creative Curriculum

The curriculum used in our Head Start and Early Head Start center based programs includes learning experiences in language, literacy, social and emotional development, math, science, social studies, creative arts, and physical development. The philosophy behind **Creative Curriculum** is that young children learn best by doing. The most important goal is to help your child become an enthusiastic life-long learner, not just in Head Start, but throughout their entire educational journey. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their own ideas and to think their own thoughts.

Parents as Teachers

Grounded in the latest research, the **Parents as Teachers** curricula supports a parent’s role in promoting school readiness and healthy development of their children. The approach is relationship-based; Home Visitors embrace learning experiences that are relevant and customized for the individual needs of each family and child.

Cavity Free Kids is an oral hygiene curriculum used to support children and families in learning about the importance of dental health and ways to prevent cavities in young children.

Second Step is a supplemental curriculum used in our Head Start classes to help preschool children in their social and emotional development – understanding and regulating their emotions and learning social skills like sharing and how to interact in a group.

Developmental Screening and Assessment

Teaching staff, with input from parents, use different research based screening and assessment tools to measure your child's individual developmental levels. We then individualize our curriculums and classroom activities to meet your child's needs.

The **Ages and Stages Developmental Questionnaire III (ASQ-3)** is a family-driven developmental assessment tool used to determine if a child's development is within the normal range for their age. It is a useful instrument for Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) and identifying children at risk of developmental delays.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (ASQ: SE-2) is a family-driven research-validated social emotional and behavioral screening tool. With the results, staff can quickly recognize young children at risk for social or emotional difficulties, identify behaviors or concerns of caregivers, and identify any need for further assessment. When the **ASQ:SE-2** results indicate that additional assessment is needed, the Mental Wellness Consultant completes the **Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)** to further assess a child's areas of need and works with parents to ensure positive outcomes.

Teaching Strategies GOLDPlus, is an online curriculum-based assessment system that assists with daily planning and works in conjunction with screening data to ensure individualized goals for every child. This assessment tool allows staff to heighten the effectiveness of their assessments while increasing the time spent working with your child.

A Typical Home Visit for the Home Based Option...

Home visits occur one time weekly and last about an hour and a half. A typical visit will consist of one hour of education from the corresponding curriculum and thirty minutes of family support services. This might change based on the needs of your family. All Home Visitors will seek your input and feedback in order to create visit plans that will meet your child and family's needs.

During the education portion of your family visit, your Home Visitor may:

- Participate in educational activities with you and your child
- Conduct developmental screenings and assessments and review the results with you
- Review your child's progress in meeting developmental milestones
- Work with you to develop and update your child's individualized goals
- Review lesson plans and seek your input for upcoming weeks
- Discuss upcoming community and Head Start events
- Discuss transitions
- Review Parent Committee Activities and the Families Give Back Activity Log
- Provide you with referrals and resources as needed

At each visit you will have the opportunity to work with your Home Visitor to help you achieve your goals as an individual, as a parent and family. Do you have a situation you are not sure about? Need help with something but not sure where to find help? Your Home Visitor is there to help you, not only at home visits but throughout the year! Your Home Visitor will

assist you with family needs, celebrate accomplishments, keep you informed of the progress of your child at Head Start, and invite you to attend events.

A Typical Socialization for the Home Based Option...

The Home Base option provides opportunities for you and your child to meet twice per month with other Home Based families to share experiences related to child development and strengthen the overall parent-child relationship. A socialization is a jointly planned event that includes activities that support individual skill development and your child's social, emotional, and language development. We also provide a healthy snack at each event. Please consider joining us for socializations, you will love these fun events.

Center Based Arrival and Dismissal

- ***Where should my child go when we arrive at the center?***

Parents that self transport should arrive at the scheduled arrival time and walk their child to the classroom. Please sign your child in and let a staff member know that the child has arrived.

- ***Where do I go to pick up my child at the center?***

Parents should arrive at the scheduled departure time and notify staff that they are there to pick up their child and sign them out.

COVID-19 Considerations in our Centers

COVID guidelines are updated frequently based on the recommendations of local, state, and federal regulatory agencies.

If children become ill with COVID-19 like symptoms during the day, they will be isolated (with adult supervision) and parents will be asked to pick up their child immediately.

Hard surfaces in the center will be disinfected regularly using an EPA approved disinfectant known to kill COVID-19.

Our staff will use hand sanitizer whenever a sink is not available for hand washing. Use of sand sanitizer on children will be closely supervised to avoid ingestion.

Surveillance Cameras

The use of video surveillance cameras will assist the program in keeping children safe within the center, safeguarding them from outside intruders, and protecting them from hazards to the fullest extent possible.

The surveillance cameras will be for agency use only.

Inspectors and other representatives from regulatory agencies will have access to the surveillance footage and will have viewing privileges when necessary.

Parents will not have access to video footage and will not be able to access the video surveillance via the internet.

Transitions

- **What is a transition?**

Transition simply means “change”. Change in early childhood can mean from home to Head Start, Home Based to Center Based, Early Head Start to Head Start, Head Start to Kindergarten, as well as a change in your child’s individual growth and development such as diaper to potty, bottle to cup, etc. Transitions can be a stressful time for both you and your child. We are here to support all of your needs to help make these times of change easier.

- **Why am I being asked to attend a transition meeting?**

Your input is valuable! We want your child’s transition to be as smooth as possible and together we can ensure that you and your child have everything needed to begin each new chapter.

- **What will the transition to Kindergarten look like?**

As always, we are here to help you advocate for your child! As you enter this next stage of your child’s education, we are available every step of the way to help you understand your rights and responsibilities concerning the education of your child in the elementary school setting, including services and supports that may be available to you and your child. In addition, we will provide your child’s Kindergarten teacher all the developmental and health outcomes from their time at Head Start.

- **What does school readiness mean for my child?**

At Head Start, your child will continue to develop their skills in the areas of health and physical development, social and emotional development, their approaches to learning, language and cognitive skills. We adapt our lesson plans and programming to meet your child’s individual needs and goals. We believe that this approach will assist your child in being developmentally ready to successfully enter Kindergarten at age 5.

Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs are included in all Head Start activities. Staff will work with families to create, develop, and support their children’s goals and to meet each child’s specific needs. Parents are supported by Head Start staff at IFSP and IEP meetings.

- **What if I suspect my child has a delay?**

If you suspect your child has a delay, please discuss this concern with your Teacher, Home Visitor, or Family Partner. Head Start staff will work with you to identify your child’s developmental level and help you seek services to assist your child.

- **What if my child has a special health and/or nutritional need?**

During your child’s enrollment, Head Start staff will ask you a series of questions to ensure that we have complete knowledge of your child’s individual needs. Head Start staff, parents, health care providers, and our consulting dietician will work together to ensure your child’s individual needs are met.

Behavior Management Policy

Behavior management is the set of guidelines that promotes the mutually respectful, positive play and work environment between the children and adults. This is accomplished by using positive guidance techniques, such as redirection. Our program promotes the use of praise and encouragement of children to assist them in achieving their goals. Corporal punishment is not an acceptable means of behavior management and is never used at Head Start. Staff will work with families to address any behavior concerns in the home or center. If your family needs further assistance with behavior management, the staff will provide educational materials and offer referrals to best meet the needs of your child and family.

Transportation Services

Head Start provides transportation services to as many children and families as possible given our limited resources. If you have access to a vehicle and can transport your child to program, we prefer that you do so as it gives other children without those resources the opportunity to attend program.

We design our bus routes to serve as many children as possible by using designated pick up and drop off points; we might not be able to pick your child up at your house. We also must maintain bus routes that ensure that children are never on the bus for longer than one hour. You and your child must be ready at least 10 minutes before your scheduled pick up time and allow for 10 minutes after your scheduled pick up. You will need to bring your child to the bus as well as pick them up at the bus door.

- ***What if I miss the bus?***

If your child misses the bus in the morning, it is the family's responsibility to bring the child to the Head Start center. Regular attendance is very important for your child's education, and chronic absence from program could jeopardize your child's enrollment. If you miss meeting the bus in the afternoon to get your child, your child will be brought back to the center and you must immediately report to the Head Start center to get your child. Please call and let us know that you are on your way.

- ***Who can get my child off the bus or pick my child up at the center?***

For your child's safety, only parents, legal guardians, or other adults (age 18 or above) listed on the **Authorization for Release of Children** are permitted to pick children up from our centers or get them off of our buses. Please be aware that **we will ask for photo identification** when someone is getting your child off the bus for the first time, or if we don't recognize them. Substitute drivers or monitors may ask for identification more often. If there is no authorized adult available to pick up your child, the driver will take him/her back to the center. Parents are responsible for picking up the child from the center immediately.

- ***Can my child bring a back pack and/or toys to school?***

Children are encouraged to bring back packs to school; however back packs with wheels or hard shell cases are not permitted. Back packs must be securely stored on buses to protect the safety of passengers. Generally, we ask that children not bring toys to school. We have plenty of items in each classroom for them to play with and explore.

Bus/Vehicle/Pedestrian Safety Tips

- Never pass a bus with red lights on! Including in parking lots
- Always wait for the bus to come to a complete stop and walk your child to the bus
- Obey the traffic laws, signals, and speed limits
- Walk on sidewalks and use crosswalks
- Drive slowly in our parking lots
- Never leave any child unattended in a vehicle

Nutrition Services

- ***Can my child bring their lunch to school?***

Head Start is committed to your child's health and wellness and ensuring that each child is offered breakfast, lunch and a snack daily. Children are not allowed to bring their own lunches. As a participant of Head Start your child is offered a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack at no cost to you.

- ***Can I send in a special treat or snack?***

We appreciate that parents enjoy sending in special treats on children's birthdays or for special event days, however we cannot permit any outside food item (homemade or prepackaged) in any Head Start center.

- ***Are Head Start Centers breastfeeding friendly?***

Yes, we would be more than happy to accommodate you and provide a comfortable space. Our breastfeeding policy is

available upon request.

Health Services

- **How do we respond to an emergency?**

Our staff are trained in Basic First Aid and CPR and will respond according to their training. For emergency situations, we will call 911 and notify parents immediately.

- ***What are health screenings?***

Within 45 calendar days of your child's entry into the Head Start program, with your permission, your child receives a growth assessment (height, weight, head circumference, and blood pressure), vision, and hearing testing. Based on your child's individual results, our Head Start staff can assist you with obtaining follow up care to promote your child's overall health.

- ***How often does my child need a dental exam?***

Within 90 calendar days of your child's entry into Head Start program, he/she needs to have a dental exam and have an established dental home. We can help you with this if you don't already have one. We encourage all children to receive a dental exam annually.

- ***How often does my child need a physical and immunizations?***

Before entering a Head Start Center or within 90 day of enrolling in the Home Based option, your child must have a physical examination completed by a health care provider. A copy needs to be provided to your Classroom Teacher or Family Partner before your child can start attending center based program. Well child examinations are required when your infant is 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 months and when your child is 2, 3, 4 and 5 years. A copy of your child's current physical must be provided to Head Start. Your child may need to be excluded from center based services without current immunization records.

- ***What if my child has allergies?***

If your child has allergies or food restrictions and needs alternatives offered outside of the regular menu, our staff will work with you and your child's health care provider to ensure that your child's daily nutritional and health needs are met while in Head Start.

- ***What is a Center Health Care Plan?***

Each Head Start center must develop a plan to protect and promote the health of children enrolled. The health care plan describes how daily health checks of each child are completed and documented, emergency procedures, how the program will care for children that become ill, infection control procedures, which staff are designated to administering medication, and what is in the first aid kit. The Center Health Care Plan is posted at each center, available upon request and posted on the ACCORD website, www.accordcorp.org.

- ***What is an Individual Health Care Plan?***

If your child has a chronic health condition, food allergy or restriction, or another type of allergy, an Individual Health Care Plan is required by our licensing agency prior to your child starting program. These plans are developed by the Center Manager with assistance from the family and child's primary care provider or specialist involved in the treatment of the child's condition. These plans are designed to document the child's individualized needs, the caregivers who will provide care and their credentials, and the training, policies, and/or competencies the caregiver identified will need to carry out the health care plan for the child.

Medication Administration

- **What if my child needs medication while attending Head Start?**
 - Head Start is permitted to administer medications with proper training. If your child has a special health or nutritional need that requires them to have medication during program hours, special arrangements can be made to accommodate your child's need.
 - Please talk with your Center Manager and we will work with you and your health care provider to ensure your child's medication needs are met and the required documentation is on file.
 - **Medication must be checked in by a Medication Administration Trained Manager. Do not send medication in your child's backpack.**
- **Administration of Non-Patient Specific Epinephrine Auto Injector Devices:**
 - The program will stock and use non-patient specific epinephrine auto-injector devices (epi pens) for emergency treatment of a person appearing to experience anaphylactic symptoms at the **guidance of 911**. Only staff who have successfully completed the Responding to Anaphylaxis training can administer the non-patient specific epinephrine auto injector device.
- **Administration of Opioid Antagonist Nasal Spray (NARCAN):**
 - The program will stock and will administer opioid antagonist nasal spray (NARCAN) to a person believed to be experiencing an opioid overdose **at the guidance of 911**. Only staff who received the Naloxone training course can administer NARCAN.

Mental Health and Wellness

- **What is mental health and wellness?**

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is important at every stage of life, from childhood through adulthood.

- **What services does a mental health and wellness consultant provide?**

Head Start contracts with a Mental Health and Behavioral Consultant to provide one on one mental wellness services to children and families. The Mental Health and Behavioral Consultant can work with you and your child to assist you in overcoming any stressors that life puts in your path.

- **How do I utilize this service?**

If you are interested in accessing this free service, please talk with your Teacher, Home Based Visitor or Family Partner and we will provide you with the information you need and assist you in this process.

Family and Community Partnerships

- **How can my family be involved in Head Start?**

Calling all family members – parents, grandparents, other family members and friends! Join our family events, adult education opportunities, or become a volunteer!

Throughout the year families can get involved and give back in a variety of ways including volunteering in the classroom, attending Parent Committee Events or working with your child on educational activities at home. **Volunteer Services = Program InKind**. As a Head Start program, we must provide 20 percent of the total costs of our grant funds through donations and volunteer services (called inkind) that benefit the program. Head Start parents and community members may volunteer their time by assisting in classrooms and working with their children at home through written instruction and activities provided by program staff. For every hour you spend at Parent Committee Events, volunteering or working with your child on educational activities at home, you are donating around \$33 per hour to your child's program.

- **What is Shared Governance?**

Very simply stated, shared governance is shared decision making and it is an essential part of our Head Start program. Shared decision making requires the ongoing work and commitment of staff, parents, community members, the Head Start Policy Council and ACCORD Corporation Board of Directors. We work together to ensure that our program operates in full compliance with local, state and federal regulations and that it provides the highest quality early education services to children and families.

The Shared Governance structure exists in a Head Start program to support the delivery of quality services to children and families and to support the meaningful role of parents in shared decision making. Parents participate in shared governance by attending Parent Committee Events, attending Policy Council meetings, joining program committees and completing program surveys.

- **What are Parent Committee Events?**

Parent Committee Events are your opportunity to meet other parents and participate in shared governance. Every Head Start parent is a member of the Parent Committee. As a member, you will have the opportunity to advise Head Start Staff in the development and implementation of program policies, activities, and services. You will also get to help plan, conduct and participate in program activities for parents, children and staff. In addition, you will have the opportunity to serve on the Head Start Policy Council as a formal member. You are a valued member of the Head Start family, you have an important voice, and your involvement makes a difference for your child and our community!

Attendance

- **What happens if I can't keep my Home Based visit?**

Each enrolled child/family is expected to maintain a regular visit schedule. Parents should contact their Home Visitor prior to the scheduled visit if they need to reschedule. Home Visitors will review and provide more information on attendance at the first Home Visit.

- **Does my Child have to attend Center Based program every day?**

Each enrolled child is expected to maintain regular attendance (85% or higher monthly). Daily attendance is a crucial part of preparing your child for Kindergarten. Parents must contact the center prior to the start of the program day if their child will not be in attendance to let us know the reason why. If we do not hear from you, our staff are required to call within the first hour of program to ensure your child's safety. Head Start Staff will review and provide more information on attendance during Family Visits.

Program Closings

- **How will I know if program closes?**

By 6:00am of the program day, if program decides to close due to weather or other circumstances, you will get a message stating that program has been closed for the day. If your child attends the school-based program at Bolivar-Richburg, we follow the school's closing schedule.

Information for Parents from the Office of Children and Family Services New York State Day Care Licensing Authority

- ACCORD Head Start follows all Federal regulations provided in the Head Start Performance Standards as well as New York State Office of Child and Family Services.
- Office of Child and Family Services Child Care complaint line: 1-800-732-5207

- In the event of an accident, serious incident or injury during our care the Office of Children and Family Services will be notified.
- Actions the program will take in the event your child is not picked up as scheduled:
 - If parent or guardian does not arrive 15 minutes after program closes or are not available at the bus drop off (child will be returned to center), the Center Manager must be contacted.
 - Parent/Guardian will be called. If they cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called. If parents, guardians, or emergency contacts cannot be reached within 30 minutes after program close, Center Manager will be contacted again.
 - After 1 hour of no contact with parents/guardians or emergency contacts, a call to Child Protective Services may be placed.
- Program Evacuation plan:

Each center has a designated primary and secondary relocation site which will be used in the event of an emergency. Parents will be notified in advance when this drill takes place, annually.

- Primary Evacuation Site: _____
- Secondary Evacuation Site: _____

Emergency Drill Information

To ensure that program staff, children and center visitors are prepared to deal with emergency situations, our program must perform routine emergency preparedness drills as required by Office of Children and Family Services. These drills include: Fire Drills, Shelter in Place, Lockout, Evacuation, and Lockdown. The program conducts these drills at each location according to the guidelines established by the agency safety committee, Head Start Performance Standards, and Office of Children and Family Services.

What are emergency drills?

Fire Drills- our children and staff will practice how to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire at our centers.

Shelter in Place- Shelter in Place is a response to an emergency that creates a situation in which it is safer to remain in the building rather than to evacuate. This could be due to severe weather, public disturbances, rabid animal sightings, chemical or biological spills, or other instances.

Lockout- Lockout is a response to an emergency situation that is happening in the general vicinity of the building. This could be used in the event of police investigations or other public concerns and the buildings will be locked and access to buildings will be denied until the threat has resolved and lockout has been lifted. Children and staff will remain indoors but can continue their regularly scheduled day.

Evacuation- An evacuation is a response to an emergency situation occurring where it is not safe to keep the children indoors at the center. Each center has two designated evacuation locations that are approved for use during these situations. An evacuation may occur in the event of: gas leak or other hazard in which the building is deemed unsafe for use.

Lockdown- Lockdown is used as a response to an imminent threat to the building and everyone inside it. In the event of a lockdown, we follow the “Run, Hide, Fight” method.

Bus Evacuation- this is a response to an emergency that would require all children to evacuate the bus that they are on when it is deemed safer to evacuate children from the bus than it would be to keep them on the bus.

How often do these drills occur?

Fire Drills- Our program is required to conduct at least one fire drill each month.

Shelter in Place- Our program is required to conduct at least two drills each year.

Lockout- Our program conducts at least one per year.

Evacuation- Our program is required to conduct at least two drills each year.

Lockdown- Our program conducts at least one per year.

Bus Evacuation- Our program is required to conduct at least two drills per year for centers that offer bussing for children.

How will we be notified of emergency drills and/or real emergencies?

Our program is required to send home written notices of planned drills including Shelter in Place, Lockout, Evacuation, Lockdown, and Bus Evacuation. The only drill that we conduct that does not require prior written notice is our fire drills as these must be conducted monthly and unannounced. If this is a true emergency, families will receive either a phone call or a text message alerting of the emergency and another when the emergency has resolved.

What resources are available to me as a Head Start Program?

ACCORD Corporation - www.accordcorp.org

Check out the Head Start pages and while you're there explore the other services of ACCORD Corporation including Business, Child Care, Crisis and Prevention, Housing Assistance and Support Services for Children and Teens.

Teaching Strategies Gold- www.teachingstrategies.com

Give your Teaching or Family Support staff your email address and they will ensure you have access to Teaching Strategies Gold! Parents have the ability to view lesson plans, individual goals, view child observations and assessments. In addition, you can add your own observations of your children to see your child's growth throughout the program year at home and at Head Start.

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center - www.eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center is your one stop shop for everything Head Start. Here you will find the Head Start Performance Standards, news and events related to Head Start and many valuable parent resources.

NYS Office of Children and Family Services - www.ocfs.state.ny.us/

Here you will find the New York State Day Care Regulations, information about adoption, day care, child protective services, and more.

National Head Start Association - www.nhsa.org/

All Head Start parents will automatically become members of the National Head Start Association. Here you will find information on Head Start news and advocacy, research, services and membership.

ACCESS Allegany - www.accessallegany.org/ Find a complete list of bus schedules for Allegany County.

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